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ABSTRACT

American education will be challenged over the next decades by a flow of increasingly diverse immigrants from all over the world and a workplace that will require a technologically sophisticated labor force. The response of the educational system to the new immigrants will have important consequences for society. Current immigrants do not have the same opportunity as their predecessors, during the great period of immigration from 1880 to 1920, to establish themselves by means of unskilled or semiskilled labor. Further, as American society becomes more culturally pluralistic, greater knowledge of people of other backgrounds becomes increasingly necessary for social adaptation. The following assumptions must form the basis for improving education for immigrants: (1) immigrant children are an asset to the schools and the country; (2) schools must develop closer ties to immigrant parents and community groups; (3) adult education is critical for immigrants and must be considered along with the needs of younger students; (4) ethnically sensitive training for all members of the educational system is critical; and (5) at the same time that schools respond to immigrants, they must strive to improve educational opportunities for blacks and other minorities, remain sensitive to the needs of all students, and enhance general educational performance. The comments of five members of the American Jewish Committee Task Force on New Immigrants and American Education and a list of the Task Force's members are appended. (FMW)

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EDUCATING THE NEWEST AMERICANS

REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON NEW IMMIGRANTS AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

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REPORT OF THE TASK FORCE ON NEW IMMIGRANTS AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

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FOREWORD

In 1987, the American Jewish Committee released *The Newest Americans*, the report of the AJC's Task Force on the Acculturation of Immigrants to American Life. Written by more than 40 experts in immigration, ethnicity, law, and social services, it analyzed the early period of the immigrants' adjustment to American society and made specific policy recommendations in the areas of economic adaptation, intergroup relations, language acquisition, and service delivery.

When we released *The Newest Americans*, several experts, led by the late civil rights leader Bayard Rustin, urged the American Jewish Committee to move from a general analysis of acculturation to a deeper look at specific critical areas of immigrant adjustment. Rustin and others put education first on the list of key topics to explore.

At that point, the Institute on Urban and Minority Education of Columbia University's Teachers College, an original member of the acculturation task force, joined AJC in sponsoring the Task Force on New Immigrants and American Education. This partnership brought together experience in acculturation issues and expertise in the education of minority students.

Working together, we assembled a group of professional educators, intergroup-relations experts, ethnic leaders, social-service providers, and leading scholars whose aim was to assess the current status of education for immigrants and to propose innovative and achievable recommendations for improving the system. We concentrated our efforts in three areas: elementary and secondary education, adult education, and the roles of parents and the community.

We aimed to have all our recommendations emerge as the consensus of the task force. At the same time, because we are a diverse group with many deeply held views on specific points, we invited task force members to append their individual comments to this report, expressing opinions either at variance from the group consensus or absent from the main text.

We hope this report will contribute to thinking about the education of newcomer children and adults. We will continue to work through our organizations to translate our recommendations into policy and action.

George M. Szabad
Herminio Martinez
Gary E. Rubin

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In the coming decades two growing trends in American life will combine to have an enormous impact on our economy and culture. First, America will become an increasingly diverse society as immigrants from all over the world continue to enter in significant numbers. Second, in a technologically sophisticated world, education will become an even more indispensable requisite for securing decent jobs and living harmoniously with others. How our schools respond to the new immigrants will have important consequences for our society.

The challenge to our schools is not unprecedented. America has always embraced a diverse population, and our schools have adjusted to cultural differences within their student populations. Thus the new immigration raises again a familiar question: How can our schools prepare newcomers to enter our mainstream society while respecting their cultural heritages? We have answered this question successfully in the past; our future depends on responding to it effectively again.

Three issues need to be addressed in assessing the challenge. How large is the immigration flow? How should schools respond to it? What resources need to be mobilized to do so?

Since 1965, the United States has experienced an immigration comparable in size but of even greater diversity than the great migrations early in this century. In addition to a continuing stream from Europe, the source of most previous immigration, 80 percent of current immigrants come from Asia and Latin America.

This new immigration will produce far-reaching social changes. For example:

- In 1980, five out of six Americans were white; one out of six was Black, Hispanic or Asian. By 2000, the proportion of whites will have dropped to two out of three, while the minority proportion will have doubled to a third.

- The above distinctions mask significant internal diversity. The term "Hispanics" comprises Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Dominicans, and Central and South Americans. Asians come from China, Indochina, the Philippines, India, and elsewhere. Subgroups with the white population, too, maintain distinctive identities depending on

whether families came from Ireland, Poland, Italy, Russia and other places in Europe. Religious diversity -- including increasing numbers of Muslims and adherents of Eastern religions as well as Jews, Catholics, and Protestants -- is also growing.

- The white population now averages 31 years of age and 1.7 children per family. Nonwhites tend to be younger and more fertile. Mexican-Americans, for example, average 22 years of age and 2.9 children per family.

- Hispanics numbered about 14 million in the 1980 census. If present trends continue, their number will grow to 47 million by 2020. Asians, whose 1980 population was 3.4 million, are growing even faster; their total could triple in this decade.

- Of the ten countries sending the most new immigrants to the United States, five are Caribbean, three are Asian, and one is South American. The Soviet Union is the only European country among the top ten.

- With most women already in the labor force and teenagers becoming a smaller proportion of the total population, an increasing proportion of new additions to America's work force will be nonwhites, including immigrants. Since immigrants come from a wide variety of economic backgrounds, they will increase the diversity of labor skills and professional talents in the United States.

- In New York City, 35 percent of the population speaks a language other than English at home. In California, Asian-Americans now outnumber Blacks; by 2020, California's whites will account for only 40 percent of the population. Texas, Florida, and Illinois are other bellwether states reflecting the transformation of America's population.

In sum, the United States is now going through a demographic revolution. Every major institution in this society -- government, communities, businesses, schools -- faces the challenge of maximizing the gains newcomers promise while minimizing the conflicts that sometimes accompany diversity. By drawing on past experience in responding to diversity and by planning carefully for the future, we can incorporate these new populations as successfully as we have previous ones.

Past experience teaches us that we cannot focus on newcomers alone. Successful integration, in the schools and elsewhere, requires a receptive host population as well as adjustments by newcomers. In all periods of American history, bias and discrimination have posed barriers to the integration of immigrants. If new groups are to acculturate successfully, we must reduce bias in the general population.

Today's newcomers differ significantly from their predecessors in the great period of immigration from 1880 to 1920. Then, new workers could rely on physical skills and sheer muscle; now academic skills are an increasingly important requisite for success.

During the wave of immigration around the turn of the twentieth century, America was experiencing a vast physical and economic expansion. Railroads needed laborers, factories required large work forces, and urban infrastructures had to be constructed or upgraded. As self-sufficient farms and small households declined, a growing garment industry supplied ready-made clothes to families that had previously made their own. Small businesses developed to sell these goods.

Immigrants flocked to all these jobs. They had the one quality needed for success in industrializing America: a willingness to work hard. Even the illiterate could do well in this economy, since their bodies rather than their brains were in demand.

This does not mean that schools were irrelevant to their achievement. Free public schools, together with settlement houses, churches, libraries, and other institutions, taught immigrant children about America and provided at least a rudimentary introduction to literacy and computational skills. They also instilled, in a sometimes heavy-handed way, common social values in students from many backgrounds.

For some immigrant children, the schools did considerably more. A minority stayed in school, graduated, and went on to college, often to public institutions offering higher education for little or no tuition. They entered professions or managerial positions that would have been inaccessible if their families had remained in the Old Country. Perhaps a quarter of Jewish children in New York and smaller proportions of other European ethnic groups took this route to success. Given the enormous numbers and cultural diversity of the immigrant children, this represented an outstanding achievement for the public schools.

Still, most immigrants needed another route to success, and the economy provided it. Jewish parents went to work in sweatshops or skilled trades, often moving up to small-business ownership. The financial foothold they gained through their work helped them maintain their children in school. It was the children of immigrants rather than the newcomers themselves who achieved mass mobility through education. Other European immigrant groups followed similar paths, except that they began their American careers in heavier and lower-paid industries and took an additional generation to attain a measure of security. The grandchildren rather than the children of these immigrants attained the education that made their social mobility possible.

Current immigrants do not have the same opportunity to establish themselves in America by means of unskilled or semiskilled labor. Unskilled jobs have decreased, victims of technology, overseas competition, or declining inner cities. Even the lowest-paid jobs require basic literacy and computational skills. Machine-shop tools must be calibrated by computer, army guns cannot be simply fired but require programming, and fast-food orders and clothes purchases are entered into inventory-tracking electronic registers. Sometimes, technology makes it possible to "dumb-down" a job. For example, supermarkets enter sales and inventory data in their computers by having machines read codes printed on the merchandise. But the entire economy cannot "dumb-down." An advanced economy requires an educated work force. "As manufacturing and other business procedures have been become more advanced," the *New York Times* reports, "the levels of reading, writing, mathematics and other skills are proving to be an obstacle to introducing these new techniques."

Nor is sophistication needed only in the workplace. As American society becomes more culturally pluralistic, greater knowledge of people of other backgrounds becomes increasingly necessary. The process of developing a broad cultural awareness begins in the schools.

Educational institutions, of course, cannot do this job alone. Throughout American history, unrealistic expectations have been foisted onto the schools. Seemingly, anyone with a complaint has felt comfortable asking teachers to remedy it, whether it be to eradicate drugs, foster proper morals, or inculcate respect for social institutions. Clearly, schools cannot bear the weight of the plethora of good intentions heaped upon them.

But if these problems cannot be solved totally by the schools, neither can educators remain aloof from them. Many factors contribute to a more skilled work force or a more tolerant population; education is certainly prominent among them. In many ways, the nation's future will be powerfully affected by the ways educational institutions react to new immigrants.

If schools are so important to immigrants' and the nation's future, we need to enhance their chances of success in dealing with new populations. This report will outline several specific ways in which teachers, administrators, parents, ethnic communities, and the public can join to improve education for newcomer children. These recommendations rest on the following set of assumptions:

- Immigrant children are an asset for the schools and the country. Too often, recommendations for improving education for newcomers treat them as a population presenting problems to be solved rather than as a fresh resource offering vitality and new talents to the school system. Although immigrants face difficult challenges, our task force is convinced that their desire to succeed in their new country offers enormous opportunities for rewarding educational experiences. Likewise, while cultural diversity sometimes results in group conflict, it also provides fascinating avenues for teachers and students to discover new insights. Pluralism is a difficult but ultimately vibrant and positive social force that can enhance all institutions, including the schools.

- Education is not confined to the schools. Immigrant children learn from teachers, parents, ethnic leaders, clergy, peers, the mass media, and other influences. Any serious proposal concerning the education of immigrants must aim to tie schools more closely to parents and community groups. It must seek to understand the struggle of newcomer parents to adjust to America and reach out to them in meaningful ways. Patterns of parent-teacher cooperation that work for native-born Americans may have to be adjusted for immigrants. Community ethnic and civic groups can play key roles in bringing newcomer families and schools closer together. The family and community context cannot be forgotten in devising educational programs.

- Education cannot be limited to children and adolescents. Adult education is critical for immigrants and must be considered along with the needs of younger students. Adults, particularly in a technologically advanced and culturally complex society, need opportunities to learn language, employment, cultural, academic and social skills relevant to their new home. Too often, resources needed to accomplish this are in short supply. Both the public and private sectors have critical roles to play in offering adult education for newcomers.

- All participants in the system must adjust to the new reality of immigrant students. This includes not only teachers, but principals, administrators, volunteers, and all who come into contact with this population. Ethnically sensitive training for dealing with new populations is critical.

- Immigrants, of course, are not the only students in the schools. At the same time as schools respond to newcomers, they must also strive to improve educational opportunities for Blacks and other minorities, remain sensitive to the needs of all students, and enhance general educational performance. This report focuses on

immigrants, but we are mindful of the need for improved educational opportunities for all. Changes made to accommodate one group will affect all the others. Responses to immigrant populations need to be made in such a way as to improve the overall capacity of the schools, enrich their cultural resources, and further needed reforms in American education in general. Any feeling that programs benefit one group at the expense of another will produce only strife. But a sense of newcomers as assets enhancing the overall nature and function of the schools will result in better intergroup relations as well as better education.

Chapter 2

ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION FOR NEW IMMIGRANTS

Schools reflect the strengths and problems of the society of which they form a critical component. As America becomes a more multicultural society, student populations will grow increasingly diverse. Some people will fear this trend and seek to impose cultural conformity on educational institutions, while others will respond with an enhanced appreciation for pluralism and a desire to promote group identity and mutual cooperation. How schools react to diversity among students will immeasurably influence the future of group life in the United States.

Growing diversity is a fact of life in both American society and American education. However one evaluates pluralism, its decisive effects on the quality of schooling cannot be ignored. The key question is how best to understand and manage the multicultural classroom for the maximum benefit of newcomers, American-born students, and teachers.

Students from various cultures bring different characteristics and learning styles to the classroom. Their performance as students cannot be separated from their experiences as immigrants. Education, to be successful, must understand and respond to their life histories.

Some children, for example, have only recently escaped war-torn countries or violent oppression. Others have experienced poverty and hunger. Some have been in constant movement for extended periods. For students with these types of backgrounds, transition to a stable school environment can be extremely difficult.

Others must adjust to school from difficult personal circumstances. Soviet Jewish youngsters, for example, have characteristic attitudes that affect learning. In many cases, the decision to leave their homeland was their parents', not theirs. They found themselves plucked out of their peer culture and friendship circles without much input into the family's migration plans. En route to the United States, they might have spent six months in temporary quarters in Italy waiting for papers and other bureaucratic requirements to clear. This uncertainty added to their feelings of uprootedness and insecurity. Once in their new country, they may discover that their parents regard the schools as inferior or undisciplined compared to Soviet educational institutions. They may have problems adapting to more informal American learning styles. This combination of resentments, insecurities, and adjustments will surely affect the students' careers in schools.

Similar problems face students of other ethnic backgrounds. Hispanics and Haitians characteristically show respect to teachers through deference and silence; in American schools these traits are often interpreted as resistance to learning. Indochinese refugee students may never have experienced a setting similar to an American classroom; they must make an enormous cultural adjustment at the same time as they struggle to master the curriculum. Asian, Hispanic, or African children may have their first experience of relating to large numbers of whites or Blacks when they go to school. They may also experience ethnic or racial discrimination for the first time there.

At the same time, of course, students' cultures can produce real classroom strengths. Many groups' backgrounds stress diligence, originality, or respect for learning. It is just as important to weave these positive characteristics into the school experience as it is to compensate for cultural problems.

The recognition of positive or problematic cultural differences does not justify stereotyping. Teachers can welcome, for example, the outstanding achievements of many Asian students in mathematics or science, but they should resist pushing those students in this direction instead of encouraging their interest in the arts and humanities as well.

The school experience of immigrant children must be understood within the context of their total response to their new environment. They must adjust not only to unfamiliar educational institutions but to strange living arrangements such as urban apartments, to life away from extended-family members who were important to them in the old country, and to neighborhoods where they must worry about crime, gangs, or drugs. Even such an everyday factor as weather can cause confusion and discomfort, since many newcomers move from south to north. Change in styles of dress can be especially difficult for sensitive youngsters.

Given all these difficult adjustments, it is easy for immigrant students to feel that schools neglect or devalue them. Held back because of their inability to do certain academic tasks, often as a result of difficulties in communication or poor scores on standarized tests, many are overage for their classes. Some who seek only high-school educations, which may represent a great advance over achievement levels in their home countries, feel neglected by teachers more concerned with college-bound youngsters. Moreover, to the degree to which schools fail to reach out to immigrant families, newcomers may see principals and teachers as insensitive or hostile to their backgrounds and communities.

Yet, despite all these problems, immigrants are a precious asset to the schools, not only because of their talents, linguistic resources, and eagerness to learn, but also because of their potential contribution to mainstream students. Americans growing up in a multicultural society -- indeed, in a "global village" -- must become aware of other cultures, languages, and ethnic traditions. They will be better prepared for the future if they meet a diverse group of fellow students when they are young. The issue of immigrants and the schools, then, involves not only how to teach newcomers but also how to take advantage of the multicultural and multilingual resources they offer to mainstream students.

This undoubtedly presents daunting challenges to teachers, administrators, guidance counselors, and other education professionals. It is relatively easy and, by now, uncontroversial to say that schools should understand immigrants better and take advantage of their cultural resources. It is much more difficult to devise practical and effective methods for making this happen at a time of growing immigration, ethnic tensions, and

intense scrutiny of educational institutions. Specifically, two obstacles need to be overcome in developing better school programs for newcomers.

First, teachers and administrators must believe that improvement in immigrant education is possible. Awareness of the problems to be faced can induce a sense of despair. After all, hundreds of thousands of newcomers are entering the country every year. They come from a bewildering array of cultures. They speak a dazzling variety of languages. They add to existing difficulties such as deteriorating school buildings, overcrowded classrooms, racial tensions, and public pressure to raise performance levels. Can anyone legitimately argue, teachers may well wonder, that any real improvement is possible given these vast needs?

Second, the history of multicultural education in the United States must give rise to a measure of skepticism. For at least a hundred years, experts have been talking about the need to respond sympathetically to immigrant students. Task forces have been empaneled, studies commissioned, recommendations made, and programs proposed. Excellent materials on multicultural education have been written, and enthusiasts have promoted them. Yet lack of pluralism in the schools remains a problem that urgently needs addressing. If past attempts to address this challenge have proven inadequate, what can a new task force propose that would improve on previous experience?

While it would not totally solve either problem, requiring that teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors be trained in multicultural education would go a long way toward addressing both. Training, both in teachers college and in in-service programs, would provide teachers the skills they need to deal with diverse student populations and would demonstrate the commitment of the educational system to address this issue seriously.

While it is true that newcomers come from a great variety of cultures, there are certain general principles applicable to teaching in a diverse classroom. Teachers need not know the details of every child's background to succeed. However, they do need to know how to deal with differences in general, how to encourage self-expression by the student and understanding by the group. Diversity presents a difficult problem that can overwhelm even excellent teachers not familiar with it. But, with training, teachers can learn to cope and even prosper in a multiethnic setting. This will become an increasingly vital skill in the future.

It is not enough to offer training in multicultural education in teachers colleges. The subject should be made an integral part of the required core curriculum, thereby demonstrating the educational system's genuine commitment to it. Courses and materials on pluralism in the classroom have been offered before, but they have not succeeded in penetrating most school districts. If this topic were a required part of teacher training and in-service programs, more instructors and administrators would be skilled in dealing with newcomers, more schools would become responsive to immigrants' needs, and more research would be conducted on student acculturation. It is time for training institutions to acknowledge that multicultural skills are indispensable for success in the classroom.

For trained teachers, excellent texts, program packages, and audio-visual materials already exist. Many of the task forces and study groups mentioned above have made useful suggestions on how to develop and use special curricula in multicultural education. Moreover, programs have been developed to break traditional classroom settings into small work groups, private study cells, and interactive sessions to enhance cross-cultural learning. At present, there is need for a clearinghouse to gather these materials and make them

available for training institutions and classroom use.

The curriculum needs special attention in a multiethnic school. The degree of commitment to pluralistic values can be measured in the breadth of learning presented to students. Respect for other cultures is demonstrated by use of classics of a broad range of cultures in addition to the great books of Western civilization. Courses in foreign languages, geography, and world history offer special opportunities to communicate an international perspective. So do extracurricular activities such as drama, art, and music clubs. In all that it does, the school reveals its attitude toward the diverse backgrounds of its students.

Language takes on special importance in developing a multicultural curriculum. How immigrants learn English -- and how American-born students learn foreign languages -- has a significant effect on the general attitude of the schools toward the backgrounds of their students.

The most common educational response to students who speak little or no English is bilingual education. In some places, bilingual programs have caused controversy over their quality or cost. In these debates, it is often forgotten that too few bilingual programs exist for students who need them. Most students who qualify for bilingual education find that no program is available for lack of funding or staff. One can hardly speak of improving a program that in too many places does not exist at all.

Where bilingual education does exist, there is often insufficient guidance for parents of children who need it. Like any program geared to special problems of students, there needs to be a real sense of partnership between family and school in pursuing educational goals. Yet, in too many cases, parents understand neither the aims nor the method of bilingual education. This gap needs to be filled for the program to be effective.

Moreover, some bilingual programs, while seeking to provide instruction appropriate to immigrant students, are circumscribed by rigid rules that compromise their integrity in the opinion of newcomers. Some programs, for example, are limited to two years, whether or not students can make the transition to mainstream classes. The rhythm of language instruction is thus dictated more by artificial deadlines than by the real needs of newcomers. This bureaucratic inflexibility leads to feelings of alienation. Some even blame these rules for exacerbating the dropout rate of immigrant students.

Language study is important for mainstream students as well as for immigrants. Knowledge of foreign languages by American-born students is a key factor in their ability to comprehend and relate to other cultures. How much schools stress foreign-language courses is an indicator of their dedication to cross-cultural understanding. The pluralistic school will see language instruction as desirable for all its students and a source of mutual understanding among them.

Another sensitive area in the relation of schools to new immigrants is programs for "special education." It has been a mark of progress in the educational field recently that handicapped, learning-impaired, and other children with special needs have received individual attention and specially structured classes. To be effective, these programs must target their students carefully and develop appropriate learning approaches for them. Yet, too often, immigrant children find themselves referred to special education not because it is helpful to them but because the system works to catch them inappropriately in its net. This is a mark of insensitivity to newcomers' real needs and potential for learning.

Referrals are made to special education on the basis of evaluations and tests designed to identify students whose problems prevent them from succeeding in mainstream classes. The integrity of special education depends on the accuracy of these instruments in targeting students who can benefit from the resources it offers. If these tests consistently designate groups not appropriate for these services, they will produce frustration and alienate students and parents from the mission of schools.

Yet immigrant children often find themselves misplaced in special-education classes. In many cases, they score poorly on tests not because of low intelligence but because of language difficulties or culture-based misunderstandings. The first requirement of testers is to know what they are measuring. If they aim to gauge ability but in reality uncover problems of acculturation, they will make mistakes in placement. This happens too often with newcomer students.

In some cases, evaluators assume that differences within the classroom present obstacles to learning. If tests show diversity in learning styles, special education is deemed in order. Yet not all differences signal problems. If children demonstrate some sort of learning impairment, they should be referred to special education whether they are immigrants or native born. Cultural differences, on the other hand, can enhance rather than obstruct education. Testing must be accurate enough to make this distinction.

Test developers and evaluators need to be more sensitive to this issue. Like teachers, administrators, and guidance counselors, they need training in cultural sensitivity. They must become aware of the unintended harmful consequences their tests may have for immigrant students. If attention is not devoted to this issue, a potentially excellent program such as special education could lose credibility with an important segment of the school population.

Ethnic tension is another issue that schools with newcomer students must face. Students who come from neighborhoods where intergroup hostilities run high may carry these feelings into the classroom. Moreover, many newcomers meet American white-ethnic or Black populations for the first time in the schools; the awkwardness of these encounters can produce discomfort leading to conflict. Immigrant youngsters are already undergoing stressful transitions, in addition to the normal stresses of maturing. Any of these factors can contribute to ethnic conflict in the schools.

Strife is not easy to handle, and some teachers and administrators react by trying to stifle it at its source. If ethnicity produces tensions, they reason, they should downplay the diverse origins of their students and promote homogenization. Sometimes, these attempts to depreciate ethnicity are justified by concepts such as "brotherhood" or "Americanism."

By ignoring deeply felt ethnic identities, such a policy almost guarantees that they will find expression in hostility and confrontation. Moreover, if schools aim to prepare students for life in a multicultural society and world, they need to value ethnic identity, not ignore it. The challenge is to use ethnic identity in positive rather than destructive ways in the school environment.

School systems in Dallas, Long Island, Chicago, and elsewhere have experimented with "ethnic sharing" programs that, far from repressing group identity, structure settings where students, teachers, and administrators describe their ethnic backgrounds and discuss their feelings about them. In this way, people of differing origins discover similarities between their own loyalties and conflicts and those of others. In subsequent sessions, all aspects of

the school, from curriculum to drama presentations to yearbooks, are reviewed to assess how well they reflect the school's multiethnic character. A sense of school unity is built not through ignoring ethnicity but through acknowledging its reality and its powerful potential for creating understanding and trust. This is a much more positive approach to diversity than the bland preaching of "brotherhood," and one much more in tune with the world students will enter upon graduation.

An extremely sensitive issue concerns the ethnic identities of teachers, administrators, and other visible school personnel. On the one hand, newcomer Hispanics and Asians, as well as American minorities such as Blacks, need role models from their own groups if they are to believe that possibilities for advancement are real. On the other hand, hiring must be done on the basis of merit as well as group identity, and trained and experienced teachers cannot be dismissed every time the student population changes. Conflicts between these two considerations have produced affirmative-action disputes in some school districts that have at times escalated into bitter conflict.

While population changes, professional interests, and community organization make some conflict inevitable, steps can be taken to respond positively to these situations. First, ethnically or racially based recruitment for school positions is possible without rigid quotas that would give jobs to applicants on the basis of group membership rather than of qualifications. Many businesses and educational institutions have established nonquota programs to attract minority candidates and have used flexible goals and timetables to measure progress in integrating their work forces. These programs, where successful, can be adapted to schools. Indeed, at this time, when a large cohort of teachers and administrators is nearing retirement, an excellent opportunity exists for introducing effective and flexible affirmative-action programs. At a more basic level, efforts are also needed to recruit members of minority groups into teacher-training institutions to assure that a sufficient pool of qualified personnel is available.

While the points made in this chapter apply broadly to public schools, differences between elementary and secondary schools need to be recognized. In the early grades, more time is available and students are more flexible. Progress in cultural awareness, language, and intergroup projects can be achieved gradually. In junior high and high school, by contrast, these efforts must be accelerated. Time is shorter, students are more developed, and pressure to teach substantive subjects is more intense. The recommendations of this chapter, then, must be adapted sensitively to the school setting in which they are applied.

Both primary and secondary schoolchildren face a common legal situation. Many students in elementary and high schools live with families in an uncertain or undocumented legal status. Too often, parents resist registering them in school for fear that contact with the educational system will make them known to immigration authorities, resulting in apprehension and deportation from this country. From New York to Los Angeles, disturbing reports have surfaced linking school absenteeism to fears about legal status.

Schools must actively counter this tendency. The Supreme Court has ruled that children have a right to education regardless of their and their parents' legal status. Educators need to assure newcomer families that they do not place themselves at risk by enrolling their children. Enforcement of the immigration laws is a responsibility of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. It cannot -- and parents must be told this -- involve the schools.

In sum, on elementary and secondary schooling, our task force recommends:

- Required training in multicultural education should be instituted for teachers and administrators in both teachers colleges and in-service programs, not only to improve teaching in ethnically diverse classrooms but also as a mark of the educational system's commitment to pluralism in schools and the larger society.

- A clearinghouse needs to be created to catalogue and make available the many resources for multicultural education that have been developed over several years. Where clearinghouses do exist, as in bilingual education, they should be more widely publicized and utilized.

- In both core-curriculum subjects such as literature and language and in educational enhancement activities such as drama and music, schools need to show appreciation of the diverse cultures of immigrants, as well as of native-born Americans.

- Bilingual programs, where needed, should receive sufficient funding and staffing. Newcomer parents and students must understand the goals and methods of bilingual programs. Moreover, these programs should not be subject to rigid bureaucratic timetables. At the same time, stress should be placed on foreign-language instruction for American-born students.

- Special education needs to maintain its own integrity by taking in only students who can benefit from its services, not immigrants who do poorly on evaluation tests because of language or cultural gaps rather than any real inability to learn in mainstream classes. Handicap, not the mere fact of difference, should distinguish special-education programs.

- Ethnic tensions in the schools should not be handled by attempting to deny or stifle group identity. On the contrary, ethnic identity should be recognized as a tool for intergroup understanding and solidarity based on programs such as ethnic sharing.

- Immigrant and minority teachers and administrators need to be brought into the schools through flexible, consensus-oriented affirmative-action and recruitment programs.

- The different requirements for learning in primary and secondary education should be kept in mind in responding to immigrant student needs.

- Schools need to reach out to newcomers to assure them that their legal status should not deter them from enrolling their children and that they place themselves at no legal risk by participating in the educational system.

Chapter 3

ADULT EDUCATION

Education is a life-long process. No adult ceases to learn after formal schooling, and many take advantage of adult-education classes to explore new areas or hone skills. Immigrants, who have much to learn about the society, language, and economy of their new country have a special need for adult education.

Indeed, they have not only a need but also a thirst for education. Classes, especially those that teach English, are oversubscribed and have long waiting lists. Rather than recruit newcomers, school systems must struggle to enroll as many applicants as they can manage. Immigrants know better than anyone else their educational needs and strive vigorously to fill them.

Education in the United States stands in sharp contrast to that in the home countries of many newcomers. Many derive from nations where education is not a right, nor is universal schooling the norm. They flock to schools, even in their mature years, when they arrive in America to take advantage of new-found opportunities.

Immigrants seize these opportunities for the most practical of reasons. They want to do well in America, and this entails learning English and acquiring skills. Given this willing student body, the major question is how can public schools and private organizations best marshal their resources to teach adult immigrants.

Newcomer students make so many demands on the educational system that it often seems impossible to meet their needs. Yet some institutions have demonstrated that effective programs can be mounted to teach them English, introduce them to new cultural values, and facilitate their economic adaptation. The best of these programs need to be carefully examined to get a sense of what adult education can accomplish.

Among the best programs for the education of adult immigrants is that of the New York Association for New Americans. While it obviously cannot provide an optimal set of services to every client, NYANA offers these services to immigrants, most of whom are refugees with special goverment funding:

- They are housed, given initial support, and provided basic health services.

- They are enrolled in language classes that teach them to negotiate their basic world in English. They do not have to wait for a new semester to get into a class; new language-instruction groups start as the need arises. Teachers are unemployed actors who can present materials in an emotionally engaging way to newcomer students.

- Job counseling and training begin simultaneously with English classes. Immigrants are not placed in programs that mechanically teach the same skills regardless of job availability. Rather, they are prepared for jobs that the market demands. In the case of professionally trained immigrants who have problems meeting technical or licensing requirements of American regulated professions, training is given in closely related fields. Foreign doctors, for example, can often make an adjustment to allied health fields such as respiration therapy or laboratory research.

- While learning English and job skills, newcomers also receive orientation sessions on topics such as consumer skills, civics, the courts, media, and nutrition.

- All services are adjusted to the cultural needs of newcomers. Soviet Jews, for example, prefer demanding and highly pressurized English classes, while other groups do better in less intense environments. Southeast Asians adjust well to office work, while Soviet Jews have greater resistance to desk jobs. This is taken into account in training.

- Tying together this network of services and assuring that it meets each immigrant's needs is the caseworker who plays the role of manager, adjusting services to individual requirements.

- On the average, these services cost about $1800 per client and are given over a six-month period.

Several qualifications need to be noted. First, this list of services is an ideal not always realized in practice. Second, NYANA can offer these services only to clients designated by the government as refugees -- those who have escaped persecution in their home countries -- for whom special resettlement money is available; the great majority of newcomers receive considerably less. Still, other agencies are beginning to move in this direction. The Federation Employment and Guidance Service has entered into agreements with some New York school districts to provide vocational adult-education programs.

Despite these qualifications, we can learn much from the NYANA experience. This agency is successful not only because of the quantity of its assistance but also because it organizes its services on the basis of sound pedagogical principles. Specifically, three characteristics of NYANA's operation stand out as guides for all groups offering adult education to newcomers:

- *Sensitivity*: NYANA does not offer a set of uniform services, but adapts them to the cultural style and individual needs of the immigrant. This sensitivity extends to counseling, curriculum, and even style of presentation.

- *Comprehensiveness*: A key feature of this model is that it coordinates cultural, language, vocational, and other types of education. It is difficult to learn English when one has constant worries about supporting a family or finding a secure home. Dealing with the manifold aspects of adjustment in a comprehensive way enhances

the educational process.

- *Flexibility*: Adults cannot make the unvarying commitment to school that children can. They must combine education with work, family responsibilities, and obligations to friends and community. Educational programs for them must be flexible in hours, locations, and pedagogical techniques.

Of course, these principles cannot be applied to the broad field of adult education as readily as to a single professional resettlement agency. Nor is a model developed in New York necessarily applicable in other parts of the country. Yet a careful review of the status of adult-education programs indicates several opportunities to move current practice closer to these goals.

Sensitivity

It is difficult to take a field as hard pressed to meet basic needs as is adult education and seek to introduce into it a large measure of sensitivity to the cultures and learning styles of immigrant students.

Adult education for immigrants is a field struggling to meet large demands. Conducted by a bewildering array of public schools, private agencies, and for-profit institutions, its resources are hardly adequate to teach the most basic skills to newcomers desperate to acquire the language and knowledge needed to advance in the American economy and society. Demands for service far outrun supply, and the diffuseness of the field makes it extremely difficult to organize. As if this weren't enough, the quality of teachers and curricula vary widely, making planning and assessment tentative at best.

Given the great demand for learning and the relative shortage of resources, adult-education programs generally strive to provide only the most basic services needed by newcomers. Often this boils down to an emphasis on survival English. Although some immigrants might be interested in more advanced courses in English and literature or in practical courses on legal, health, nutritional, or consumer matters, most schools can provide little more than elementary English.

The style as well as the substance of many adult-education classes reflects a system struggling to meet pressing needs. Classes routinely use rote materials and pedestrian pedagogical methods. Too seldom is there a sense of joy of learning or the use of colorful or exciting instructional materials. Too many classes aim to get by rather than to thrive.

It may seem extravagant or hopelessly idealistic to advocate a greater measure of cultural sensitivity in a system that must strive so hard to provide rudimentary learning. If so many other goals are jettisoned to concentrate on survival English, must special attention to newcomers' backgrounds also assume a lower priority so that attention can focus on basic skills?

But cultural sensitivity is not a luxury in immigrant adult education; it is an indispensable component for success. Even basic English courses need to take cultural variation into account.

Immigrants have widely different attitudes toward education, learning styles, and reactions to pedagogic techniques. Some respond better to high-pressure classroom

instruction, some to more relaxed methods. Some cultures place a high premium on student cooperation, others stress individual effort. Even teaching of basic survival English is deeply affected by these differences. No simplistic program will be effective across the spectrum of immigrant groups.

For this reason, teachers of adult education need the same training in cultural sensitivity as do their elementary- and secondary-school peers. It cannot be assumed that programs aimed at adults require less ethnic understanding that those designed for children. If anything, the opposite is the case. Adults are more likely to be enmeshed in the culture of their homeland than are their more adaptable offspring. Tailoring teaching styles to their needs therefore becomes more important. Teacher-training courses especially must respond to this need.

Because adults are so often enmeshed in their native cultures, teaching only English to them may not meet their most basic needs. They often work at jobs where native-language skills are critical to success and advancement, since their superiors and co-workers may come from the same country. Under these conditions, basic survival skills include native-language competency as well as English.

Adult students will also be affected by the general cultural sensitivity of a school. They relate to the school in a dual role: as parents of students and as students themselves. If schools demonstrate a willingness to reach out to them as parents, and to tailor parent-teacher activities to immigrant needs and lifestyles, parents will feel more comfortable in their role as students as well as in their role as parents.

Moreover, mature immigrants and the general public are subtly affected by the ways in which adult students are labeled. Many systems advertise their programs as enhancing "adult literacy." This carries the covert message that adults not in the system are "illiterate," which in our culture is usually taken to mean "dumb." In fact, many newcomers are quite literate in their native cultures, and what they need from the school is not literacy per se but instruction in English. A term such as "language proficiency" would better reflect this goal.

Comprehensiveness

The current adult-education system is characterized not only by its concentration on basic skills but also by its diffuseness. A large variety of institutions offer programs in this field, including public schools, private agencies, universities, community colleges, for-profit businesses, labor unions, and community associations. The quality of instruction and the subjects offered vary enormously. A bewildering choice of options faces the adult immigrant in search of education. Most newcomers seek language courses or high-school-equivalency programs, and they can find them at a number of locations under a wide variety of sponsorships.

This diversity is a great strength of the system. Many of the groups offering instruction, such as community associations or labor unions, fit naturally into newcomers' daily routines. Others, such as schools or private agencies, are integral parts of neighborhoods where immigrants live. Still others, such as for-profit schools, introduce newcomers into the corporate culture. The many options available to immigrants allow them to fit adult education into their other activities.

Still, diversity of educational options has drawbacks as well as advantages. The multiple options in the system present great difficulties for coordination. One of the significant strengths of the NYANA system is its comprehensiveness. Language, cultural orientation, housing, job counseling, etc. are all done at one location and constitute a coherent case plan. This becomes difficult when services are scattered in many sites and under various auspices.

Some mechanisms have been developed to coordinate diverse adult-education networks. In New York, the Literacy Assistance Center serves as a central information resource for various programs and makes referrals to people seeking classes. Attempts have also been made to combine services in programs such as bilingual vocational education, though these have not generally caught on. In many cases, separate language and vocational classes have proved easier to fund that the comprehensive approach.

Still, more could be done to improve the comprehensiveness of immigrant adult education. For one thing, the neighborhood school could serve as more of a center for education across the board than it now generally does. In fact, the school could approach, if it could not match, the private agency as a coordinator of education services for its neighborhood, combining within its walls child education; language, vocational and cultural training for adults; parent-teacher activities; and meetings of voluntary groups. This would allow schools to marshal their resources to serve immigrants and others more effectively.

Another idea enhancing cooperation is co-location. Even when under different auspices, if various programs could be located at the same site, immigrants could negotiate them more easily. It is important to move in the direction of easing newcomers' access to a coordinated set of services. Centralizing adult-education programs strengthens neighborhoods and increases community empowerment.

One other population needs to be taken into account in considering comprehensive services for adult newcomers: the native-born American population. Demand for immigrant education, especially in language, is so high that the entire adult-education budget could be expended to meet this need. Pressures to do so should be resisted. Native-born American adults also need classes; their needs cannot be subordinated to those of immigrants. And immigrants, too, once they master English, or in the second generation, will want to take advantage of such mainstream classes. They must be integrated along with immigrant-oriented instruction into a comprehensive adult-education system.

Flexibility

Education programs are usually run by bureaucracies that work on fixed time schedules. Classes operate on a semester basis. If a student misses the start of a course, he or she must wait until the next cycle begins to enroll. Curricula are planned to move in a steady progression from one lesson to the next.

Unfortunately, immigrant lives do not conform to such a rigid schedule. Newcomers have so many responsibilities with family, job, and community that they can often find time to begin class only after the semester has started. Efforts much be made to establish flexible beginning points for language and vocational courses.

Teachers should also strive for flexibility in assessing the classroom performance of adult immigrant students. Achievements that may seem mediocre when done by native-born students may represent a more significant advance when done by a newcomer adjusting to a

new job, living in cramped quarters, and worried about the living standards of spouse and children. Progress must be measured in ways appropriate to the student population.

A special note of flexibility should apply to Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) programs. This legislation provides funding to contractors who train immigrants on the job, thus increasing their skills and employability. But the way in which many JPTA programs operate reduces their flexibility for immigrant adults.

In many cases, JTPA contracts are based on performance criteria. Money goes to agencies or businesses that produce demonstrated results. In order to guarantee success, programs sometimes "cream," or take in only students likely to do well. This leaves those most in need of training out of the process. In some cases, English language is considered an important criterion for success; "creaming" therefore eliminates many immigrant adults. In addition, JPTA in many places lacks cultural sensitivity. It trains for mainstream jobs without taking ethnic or cultural variations into account.

These problems are compounded in JTPA programs run by for-profit corporations. Because contracts pay well on a fee-for-performance basis, private training schools have a strong incentive to cream and provide standardized programs. They need show no inclination to tailor courses to meet the needs of special adult students, such as immigrants.

Job training requires a different mindset. The field of training the handicapped has developed the concept of a "supportive environment" where students can learn new skills in an atmosphere they know has consideration for their special needs. Immigrants, too, need a "supportive environment" which understands their cultural backgrounds, ethnic traits, and job adjustment needs. Future training programs, including JTPA, should move in this direction. It is especially important to reinforce current efforts to channel training funds through existing community-based or ethnic groups.

Legal Issues

Like immigrant children, too many adults avoid schools because of fears that coming into contact with official institutions would reveal their undocumented legal status. Even newcomers in the country legally, including American citizens, sometimes stay away from mainstream services out of concern that they will be mistaken for illegal residents.

The schools' answer to this problem must be clear: the educational sphere is a place to learn, not to carry out enforcement actions that are the responsibility of federal authorities. No one benefits when any potential student, whether adult or child, stays away from needed education. As in the case of element and secondary schooling, active outreach is needed to assure newcomers that pursuing education will not result in legal difficulties threatening expulsion from the country.

In addition, the 1986 Immigration Act requires that previously undocumented aliens who took advantage of the law's legalization program to acquire legal status in the United States must either demonstrate knowledge of civics and English or be enrolled in classes on these subjects before they can be granted citizenship. This will require the setting up of many new educational programs for newcomers. The danger exists that many of these new classes, created the meet a specific demand, will be of low quality. Care must be taken to assure that newly legalized aliens receive competent instruction in the subjects the law requires and that unqualified providers do not enter the field.

Finally, new legal initiatives need to conform to social realities. Recently, several congressional bills have been proposed that would favor highly educated aliens in deciding who gains admission to the United States. These bills assume that current newcomers are uninterested in learning so we must import people who have received high-level education elsewhere. But the facts cited in this chapter refute this assumption. Present-day immigrants are so eager to learn English, vocational skills, and other subjects that classes are oversubscribed without any recruitment effort on the part of the schools. We already have a newcomer population vitally interested in improving their intellect and skills. New legislation must take this reality into account.

The following specific policy recommendations flow from this chapter:

- Adult-education programs, like those for children, need to take the cultural heritages of students into account. At a time of scarce resources, this is a key factor in their effective functioning.

- Care should be exercised to assure that descriptions of adult-education programs do not denigrate immigrants. Calling them "literacy" programs could give the impression that newcomers are illiterate. "Education or language improvement" is a better term.

- Adult education should recognize the many interconnected needs of adult immigrants by providing comprehensive services within a single agency, using schools as neighborhood centers, assigning clearinghouse functions to one provider, or co-locating programs in a common site.

- Programs should aim for flexibility to respond to the work schedules and family responsibilities of newcomer adults. They should also take into account their need to function in both English and, in some community and workplace situations, in their native tongues. Rigid semester organization of learning often does not work for these students.

- Job-training efforts need to demonstrate cultural sesitivity and reach out to more immigrant adults. They need to avoid "creaming" potentially successful students and reach deeper into the community to provide training services.

- Worries about legal status should not deter newcomers from coming to educational resources at any level. New legislation needs to take into account the thirst of newcomers for education.

Chapter 4

THE HOME AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Schools do not exist in a vacuum. At best, they constitute an integral component of their communities and a vital center of immigrants' lives. At worst, they maintain an uncomfortable distance from the places where newcomers live, work, and meet and create a sense of alienation from their surroundings. Either way, the relation of schools to immigrant families, communities, and workplaces is a key factor in determining their success in educating newcomers.

Many immigrants have different conceptions of educational methods and goals than do American-born groups. Haitians, for example, often lay particular stress on the discipline function of the school. Following the cues of their culture, parents give up their children to the authority of the school. To take an active role in a PTA or to aim for a close relationship with a teacher would, in their view, violate an implicit commitment they have made in their own minds not to challenge the control of official school personnel. Moreover, they encourage their children to show respect by remaining silent during lessons and not disrupting the decorum of the classroom.

In a school system that expects active student participation, lively classroom discussions, and vibrant PTAs, this behavior of Haitian newcomers seems out of place. Moreover, it is widely taken as a sign that Haitians care little about schooling, Yet the opposite is true. Though unfamiliar to American culture, the patterns that seem to signal noninvolvement in fact stem from Haitians' deep desire to see their children succeed, which they believe is best done through discipline. Behavior Americans take as demonstrating lack of concern in fact stems from an intense effort to have their children do as well as possible.

This cultural gap can generate several problems at both school and home. Most obviously, it can produce adjustment problems in the classroom since the behaviors it encourages, with the best of intentions, deviate from those likely to lead to educational success. In turn, when students see that parents' advice leads to problems in school, they often lose respect for their elders, a process than loosens family ties.

In this atmosphere, parents and teachers often get together only after some educational crisis has occurred. At that point, it is too late to do anything about the problem. In any case, the two sides lack the mutual understanding to mount a common strategy to help a problem child.

The solution to this problem exists within the neighborhood itself. Ethnic community groups can provide the necessary liaison between school and parents. In New York, for example, the Haitian Centers Council maintains programs to help newcomers understand school systems and to help school personnel relate better to parents and students. These indigenous communal groups can bridge the gap between the classroom and the living room. They are used too infrequently by both parents and school authorities. Their involvement in education should increase.

Educational success with immigrants in general would improve through programs that move neighborhood groups into the schools and schools into the neighborhood. This is true for both affective and substantive reasons. Students will do better in schools they feel care about their cultures, their families, their social environment, and about them. Moreover, groups that grow naturally from community ties can make significant contributions to academic performance and parental involvement, as the case of the Haitian Centers Council demonstrates. In decorating the schools, choosing meeting sites, deciding what music to play in assemblies and other events where choice of expression is possible, schools should opt for artistic expressions that show knowledge of newcomer cultures and places of residence.

Immigrants also need help in acculturating to normal ways of school operations. Several types of parent contact with teachers or administrators, for example, operate on the due-process model.

If parents want to question placement of children in special education or challenge a disciplinary decision, they often have to pursue their grievance through formal channels. But in many cases, these procedures are thoroughly unfamiliar to newcomer parents and students. In the same way, positive opportunities such as classes for gifted children are unknown to many immigrants. Here again, community liaisons familiar with both standard procedures and immigrants' attitudes can play useful intermediary roles.

On a more basic level, a host of informal but nevertheless very real barriers can arise to block positive relations between immigrant parents and the schools. Lack of proficiency in English makes many newcomers reluctant to take an active part in school activities. Both parents in many cases must work to maintain a minimal standard of living, leaving little time for contact with teachers. Being unfamiliar with the structure of American education, many immigrants do not even know with whom to talk when they walk into a school building. In most cases, their first contact is a guard whose job is to regulate entry, not facilitate it.

School organizations like the PTA should facilitate this relationship but too often do not. In many cases, PTAs are closed groups that keep newcomers out rather than inviting them in. But this need not be the case. PTAs and other formal and informal school groups need the same kind of sensitivity training and outreach consciousness as do professional teachers and administrators.

Like cultural sensitivity, parental involvement is not a luxury but a necessity. Schools simply cannot do their jobs without actively involving families, especially when dealing with immigrants. But for this to happen all groups connected to the school, from principals to instructors to volunteers, will have to reorient their activities to make them meaningful to newcomers.

Among the major components of American society now playing a role in the schools is the business community. The involvement of corporations through study panels, job

programs, and direct support has increased dramatically in the past few years. No doubt, part of this trend is influenced by a genuine desire to improve schools and better society. But some is also due to rational economic calculations: a work force capable of handling the demands for success today requires a competently educated school population.

Business cannot aim to improve American education without taking student diversity into account. There was a time when, if corporations felt uncomfortable with ethnic diversity in large cities, they could move to the suburbs or less mixed areas of the country. That is impossible now, for two reasons. First, immigrants have moved to every part of this country, so businesses will face heterogeneity wherever they go. Second, regardless of where they locate, corporations must function in a global marketplace and need multicultural skills to relate to others. Training programs in managing diverse work forces or cultural communications are increasingly popular in executive suites.

Given its new approach to diversity, business can play a useful role in enhancing the multicultural nature of American schools. Its adopt-a-school, summer jobs and scholarship programs should reflect awareness of the cultural diversity of the youngsters they benefit. Corporations should use their influence on the schools to further intercultural understanding.

Teacher-training courses should stress awareness among teachers of the world outside the classroom. Too often, teachers have an insufficient idea of the workplace where the materials they are teaching students will be put to use. Many of their current students, especially immigrants, work after school, yet this too often remains a separate part of youngsters' lives, not one integrated into their school careers. Reaching out into the neighborhood means greater efforts to understand the world in which newcomers live and integrate it into school activities.

Finally, schools should aim to house important community activities. Immigrant associations, neighborhood groups, and youth organizations should use schools regularly as meeting places. Their activities should be covered in the neighborhood and ethnic press. School facilities such as gymnasiums and auditoriums should be available for local residents' use. In this way, schools would become an integral part of the area and culture within which they function.

In sum, on family and community issues, our task force makes the following recommendations:

- Ethnic and community groups should play an enhanced role as intermediaries between schools and immigrant students and parents.

- The decor, art, music, and appearance of schools should demonstrate sensitivity to the cultures of populations that learn in them.

- Immigrants should be helped to use due-process mechanisms, which may be unfamiliar to their cultures, to question or get more information on programs or decisions that affect their children.

- All volunteer groups, such as PTAs, should make special efforts to overcome a sense of being "in-groups" and reach out to newcomer parents.

- Businesses increasingly involved in the schools should use their influence to enhance

multicultural awareness, which will be crucial to corporate success in the future.

- Teacher-training courses should encourage teachers to learn more about the world of their students outside the classroom.

- Schools should integrate more into communities by serving as sites for meetings of immigrant groups, neighborhood associations, and youth organizations.

Appendix

COMMENTS OF TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Lawrence Fuchs
Brandeis University

The biggest help we can be to immigrant children and American born children (the section on elementary and secondary schooling) is first, to strengthen the capacity of their parents to provide a continuity of strong, loving care for them and second, to strengthen the abilities of our teachers to provide sound, thorough, challenging education from grade one up in fundamental skills, including English, whether that is through bilingual programs, teaching English as a second language, or some form of immersion.

There is an aspect of this report that troubles me a bit. It fails to distinguish among immigrant groups with respect to the different problems they face. Clearly, we are seeing extraordinary differences among groups in their ability to handle American education. The greatest challenge we face in education is the very high dropout rate among native born Black Americans, Puerto Ricans and Mexican Americans -- and the first two groups aren't even immigrants. My hunch is that we have really very little good knowledge about what is working well for the kids from those groups who make it.

John Mogulescu and John Garvey
City University of New York

We believe that this report is a thoughtful and balanced document that should be distributed widely and discussed extensively. As individuals who have worked for many years in adult education in New York City, we are especially pleased that the concerns and needs of adult students have been featured so prominently in this report. It is also clear that the findings and conclusions in the chapter on adults fit well with those in the other chapters.

We would like to add several observations and comments. The first concerns multi-cultural education. We have no disagreements with the report's prescription of curricular efforts designed to highlight the multiplicity of the world's cultures. In those schools whose enrollments include children from many corners of the world, opportunities for sharing and discovery are plentiful and should be taken advantage of. We are, however, convinced that leaving the matter there will not be sufficient.

As most readers of the report will realize, school attendance, especially at the elementary levels, remains dramatically segregated. In many cities, white school enrollments have dropped remarkably as growing numbers of white parents have enrolled children in private or parochial schools. Far more often than not, immigrant children in those cities will be attending classes with many children from the same background but with very few from different ones. Meanwhile, many suburban and semi-urban schools have few, if any, immigrant or non-white children.

These realities pose a great challenge for educators for stereotypes are learned not only when children from different backgrounds meet each other but also when they do not. The burden, therefore, rests on educators and school systems to introduce a curriculum that will take on the issues of racism and prejudice even when there are no potential victims of such bias enrolled in the schools.

Our second comment concerns the report's evaluation of the quality of existing ESOL instruction for adults. We are concerned that the report paints too dismal a picture about the current state of ESOL instruction. While the realities of "rote materials and pedestrian pedagogical methods" that the report points to are certainly in evidence, there is much else as well. We'd like to briefly describe some of that.

There are programs which feature imaginative approaches to language learning utilizing resources as varied as oral histories and computer software. There are programs which provide extended opportunities for their students to write -- to write about the pains and joys of their old worlds as well as the mysteries and challenges of their new one. There are programs which include cultural events which provide opportunities for students to share elements of their native cultures with each other. There are programs which are alert to the profound strains that life in this country can place on families and work hard to create opportunities for parents to understand some of what their children are doing without abandoning an appreciation for their own culture. Finally, very few programs operate on a rigid schedule; most provide more or less continual access to prospective students. Difficulties in enrollment are far more often the consequence of too few available slots than of inappropriate scheduling.

Good programs don't come easily. They are the result of many years of hard work by dedicated individuals who actively work to improve their craft and that of their colleagues. That work is evident in the prominent role that adult educators play in TESOL, the national organization for teachers of ESOL, and in ongoing participation in staff development activities. Our task now is to provide the circumstances and opportunities for the accomplishment of some to become the standard for all. That will require time and money but they will be both well spent.

In New York City, where we are most familiar with recent developments, the last five years have witnessed the development of a city-wide adult education system which provides literacy and language instruction to almost 50,000 adults each year. The commitment of the city and state to the development of the material and human resources for effective instruction is bearing fruit. More and more individuals are choosing to devote themselves to teaching adults; more and more of them are participating in staff development and finally, more and more of them are becoming expert literacy and language teachers. We know that this development is not unique to New York City. Thus, while we agree that there is still much to accomplish, we believe it essential to acknowledge how much has been done.

Our last comment concerns the role of proprietary schools. While this is not the occasion for a lengthy description of the various shortcomings of many of those institutions, we would like to point out that the first priority of those institutions is to make money and not to provide high quality educational services. Indeed, in the course of pursuing that first goals, many of those schools have resorted to questionable recruitment, enrollment, and financial assistance practices that continue to attract national media attention.

The proprietary schools' services offered to immigrant students are plagued by the same kinds of educational malpractice. As a result, we are unaware of the kind of beneficial experience that the report suggests might be found through enrollment in such institutions. The report obviously was not about these schools but, since they were mentioned, we felt obliged to record our profound dismay at what they typically do in the name of education.

In closing, we'd like to lay it was an honor to be asked to participate on the task force and a pleasure to read the report.

Luis Reyes
Aspira of New York

I believe the Task Force's report makes a definite contribution to the education of immigrant children in meeting its mandate "to propose innovative and achievable recommendations for improving the system." Where I take issue with the report, it is in not going far enough in its formulation of policy regarding immigrant children's language development. I am also troubled by the generally celebratory description of our nation's response to cultural difference as contained in the Introduction (Chapter 1).

A more critical analysis of the history of the United States and of American education would call into question the statement: "America has always embraced a diverse population, and our schools have adjusted to cultural differences within their student populations." Witness the experience of African American children, the exclusion of Asians, the German scare during World War I and its chilling effect on the diverse bilingual schools created by immigrant communities, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, the Native American experience in the Bureau of Indian Affairs schools, and the failure of the public schools to educate and graduate over one half of Puerto Rican and Mexican American children.

I believe we cannot improve education for newcomer children unless we deal with the continuing issue of incorporating American "minority" children and communities into the economic and social mainstream and incorporating their individual and collective experiences, values, languages, and cultural worldviews into the education process. The promise of multicultural education is precisely this with the recognition that this will mean an ongoing struggle to define education as a process in which all students and adults gain insights about our democratic ideals, about the problem of continuing racism and bias in our society, and about the role of education in fostering social action and critical citizenship skills.

The language development of immigrant and ethnolinguistic minority students must be grounded in a philosophy of linguistic pluralism in the schools with full bilingualism as a goal for these children. Twenty years of experience in bilingual classrooms and the best research presently available indicate that purely transitional programs which do not have the goals of academic language proficiency in English and the mother tongue are inadequate to

lift language minority students' native language skills. This will require a commitment of resources and training of monolingual and bilingual school personnel.

We cannot underestimate the costs of providing quality education for immigrant and ethnolinguistic minority students. However, the alternatives are undereducated and marginalized youth and adults who will burden all our social welfare systems. The support of educators and enlightened citizens is indispensable at a time of heightened racial and ethnic divisions in some of our large cities. Nativism is a subterranean river in our national psyche which must be dammed if the mainstream is to be broad enough and deep enough for all to navigate.

Josef Sirefman
Hofstra University

The admirable goals of this report require the allocation of significant financing to be realized. In an era of deficits at all government levels, record private debt, decaying infrastructure, record oil imports, disappointment with urban school systems, increasing ranks of homeless, competition for resources will be intense indeed. All the more when the repeated call to the federal government is to reduce spending and increase taxes (not to subsidize new programs but to reduce the rate at which the debt grows). Therefore attention must be paid to the cost of these goals. Perhaps the next step in the study process should be the development of concepts for determining the fair shares of government, the private sector, and not-for-profits, as well as the rationale for persuading each sector of the practicality of their respective participations.

Arturo Vargas
National Council of LaRaza

This document, as well as other recent reports on immigrant children and adults in our nation's schools, illustrates the challenges our educational system faces today. Perhaps the most important message in this report is obscured by its simplicity. Educators and other service providers must ensure that the services they provide are appropriate for their target population. To do so, educators must know their students and become familiar with their experiences.

Educators who serve Hispanic children and adults should consider this report one of the many resources in designing effective curricula and interventions. It is important to recognize that the issues raised in this document are applicable to some Hispanic immigrants, and may not be applicable to Hispanic families who have been in this country as long as -- or longer than -- many Anglo families.

It is dangerously easy to blame the difficulties in adequately educating Hispanic children on language or on their recent migration to this country. Ensuring that the native Hispanic population receives an appropriate education may be no less difficult than ensuring that the newcomer population receives as much.

Schools must be sensitive to the needs of newcomer as well as native-born language-minority children; sometimes the needs are similar, often they are not. To do any less simply forfeits the future of these children, and possibly the future of this nation.

THE TASK FORCE ON NEW IMMIGRANTS AND AMERICAN EDUCATION

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